

**REMARKS**

Claims 7-10 and 12 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, the drawings and claims 7-10 are amended, and claim 11 is canceled. No new matter is added.

Reconsideration in view of the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

The Office Action objects to Figures 2 and 3 because only which is old is illustrated. Figures 2 and 3 are amended to recite "Comparative Art" to obviate the objection. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the objection.

The Office Action rejects claims 7, 11, and 12 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Fukuda (U.S. Patent No. 4,802,840); rejects claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fukuda in view of Suzuki (U.S. Patent No. 6,193,497); and rejects claims 9 and 10 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Fukuda in view of Masaaki (JP 2000-326318). The §102(b) rejection as it pertains to canceled claim 11 is now moot. However, Applicants respectfully traverse the §102(b) and §103(a) rejections as they pertain to the remainder of the claims, respectively.

Specifically, Applicants assert that neither Fukuda, Suzuki, nor Masaaki, individually or in combination, disclose or suggest a die for forming a honeycomb body, the die including at least a structure provided with groovy slits formed on a front face thereof, the slits being formed by cell blocks, and back holes on a back face thereof, each hole being communicatively connected with the slit, wherein the number of the cell blocks per one side of the die is an even number, and the back holes are disposed at every other position of the cell blocks, as recited in independent claim 7.

Fukuda discloses a die for molding a honeycomb structure including a molding passage having mutually independent supply passages that are opposite to intersecting portions and a through hole for communicating mutually adjacent supply passages being

provided at a place forming part of each partition wall between supply passages and connecting with said molding passage. Fukuda, however, fails to disclose a die for forming a honeycomb body, the die including at least a structure provided with groovy slits formed on a front face thereof, the slits being formed by cell blocks, and back holes on a back face thereof, each hole being communicatively connected with the slit, wherein the number of the cell blocks per one side of the die is an even number, and the back holes are disposed at every other position of the cell blocks, as recited in claim 7.

Suzuki discloses a honeycomb extrusion die for extruding a ceramic honeycomb body having intersecting slits formed by cell blocks, and raw material feeding holes which are communicated with slits at intersecting positions of the slits. Suzuki, however, also fails to disclose a die for forming a honeycomb body wherein at least the number of the cell blocks per one side of the die is an even number, and the back holes are disposed at every other position of the cell blocks, as recited in claim 7.

Masaaki discloses a die for molding a honeycomb structural body having feeding holes and honeycomb-like slit grooves which communicate with the feeding holes. Masaaki, however, also fails to disclose at least the aforementioned feature of claim 7, and therefore, fails to make up for the deficiencies of Fukuda and Suzuki.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully assert that neither Fukuda, Suzuki, nor Masaaki, individually or in combination, disclose or suggest a die for forming a honeycomb body, the die including at least a structure provided with groovy slits formed on a front face thereof, the slits being formed by cell blocks, and back holes on a back face thereof, each hole being communicatively connected with the slit, wherein the number of the cell blocks per one side of the die is an even number, and the back holes are disposed at every other position of the cell blocks, as recited in independent claim 7.

In accordance with the above remarks, Applicants submit that independent claim 7 defines patentable subject matter. Claims 8-10 and 12 depend from claim 7, and therefore, also define patentable subject matter. Thus Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the §102(b) and §103(a) rejections.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 7-10 and 12 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



James A. Oliff  
Registration No. 27,075

Bogdan A. Zinchenko  
Registration No. 57,473

JAO:BAZ/hs

Attachment:  
Replacement Drawing Sheet

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**OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC**  
**P.O. Box 19928**  
**Alexandria, Virginia 22320**  
**Telephone: (703) 836-6400**

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**Amendments to the Drawings:**

The attached replacement drawing sheet makes changes to Figs. 2 and 3, and replaces the original sheets with Figs. 2 and 3.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet